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SUBJECT: SUDANESE REFUGEES IN CHAD: PRM MONITORING VISIT

REF: (A) NDJAMENA 360, (B) KHARTOUM 2131

NDJAMENA 00000413 001.2 OF 005

¶11. Summary. PRM/AFR Neil Ahlsten (Chad/Darfur Program Officer) travelled to eastern Chad from February 17 to March 2 to visit refugee camps sheltering over 200,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur. Since January, at least 3,500 new arrivals have been registered in Gaga Camp after fleeing from insecurity in West Darfur or the Sudan/Chad border south of Adre. Banditry and carjackings north of Adre have limited access to some of the camps, and moving Am Nabak Camp has become a top priority for UNHCR. Basic assistance in food, water, primary health care and nutrition are operating well in almost all of the camps. Malnutrition rates have fallen to their lowest levels since the arrival of the refugees. Education and environmental programs are improving slowly but still have significant gaps. Funding shortfalls in 2006 will limit UNHCR activities and could push the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) to phase out its programs. End summary.

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Registration and Protection
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¶12. PRM/AFR Neil Ahlsten visited eight of the twelve refugee camps in eastern Chad to monitor PRM funded activities, examine the security situation and review the state of contingency planning. According to the latest figures, 206,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur live in the twelve camps. With verification exercises complete, phase three of the registration process is underway in Kounoungou and Farchana camps, and will begin soon in the other camps. UNHCR expects to begin issuing photo identification cards for refugees within the next couple of months. UNHCR is documenting all births in the camp, but the GoC is still not allowing birth certificates to be issued because of the implications for citizenship. According to Chadian law, all people born within its borders have eligibility for citizenship.

¶13. Gaga Camp has received over 3,500 new arrivals since the beginning of the year and continues to receive between 50 - 150 new arrivals each day. Exact figures for the camp population are not available since at any given time one hundred or more new arrivals are waiting at the UNHCR office

to be registered, while others stay in the camp a few days before declaring their presence to UNHCR. Roughly half of the new arrivals are from the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps of Masteri and Mornei in West Darfur. Some of these newly arrived refugees reported that the Sudanese Arabs had raided their homes or micro-enterprises on multiple occasions. The other half were refugees living in Chadian host communities in border areas south of Adre. These refugees fled after GoC forces withdrew from these areas to reinforce positions in Adre, leaving these villages open to small opportunistic attacks (reftel). UNHCR suspects that some of these new arrivals are actually Chadian IDPs fleeing the border areas. UNHCR's policy toward accepting Chadian IDPs in the refugee camps is ambivalent. Some senior staff members are adamant that they will not accept IDPs into the camps, while others see it as a natural extension of UNHCR's mandate to become more involved in IDP programs and confessed that UNHCR is not pressing the new arrivals to determine which side of the border they are originally from.

¶4. Regarding protection, UNHCR is supporting 189 Chadian gendarmes at the camps and will increase this to 235 in the coming months. Refugee security committees operate within each camp and generally feel comfortable referring policing issues to Chadian gendarmes. Refugee leaders in Oure Cassoni who conducted a strike in January because of poor security around the camp said that the specific issues leading to the insecurity have largely been resolved with the support of the local authorities. In nearly all of the camps visited, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) continues to be a significant security concern for women collecting firewood. Firewood collection programs, SGBV education and counseling programs are available, but numerous incidents of sexual assault are still reported. One day prior to the visit to Gaga Camp, a man was arrested

NDJAMENA 00000413 002.2 OF 005

after he beat his wife and stabbed a neighboring woman who tried to intervene.

¶5. Recruitment by the Sudanese rebel groups is rumored to occur in many of the camps, but there have been few confirmed incidents. On March 2, local authorities detained 14 young men who were leaving Kounoungou Camp late at night. The group said that they had been recruited by a rebel movement and were planning to leave for Sudan. In February, UNHCR staff witnessed an incident of suspected recruitment in Touloum Camp. UNHCR reports that relevant ministers and governors in the GoC deny that recruitment is occurring in the camps.

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Getting the Basics Right: Food, Health and Nutrition
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¶6. Basic assistance in food, health and nutrition are generally meeting international standards. WFP food distributions are attaining the full ration target of 2100 kcal in all of the camps. The food pipeline is strong over the next six months as the bulk of WFP's food requirements for eastern Chad are already covered through October of 2006. WFP is in the process of expanding its warehousing capacity in the camps to increase stocks prior to the rainy season. As reported in Reftel B, milling of the wheat and sorghum is still problematic, as many refugees give between 30 - 40% of their staple food ration as an in kind payment to private mills. This situation should improve in the coming months as UNHCR and WFP will partner to place mills in each of the refugee camps to increase the total amount of food available to refugees.

¶7. Primary health care is progressing well in most of the camps. Hospitals at Bahai and Iriba are well supported by

NGO partners, though the hospital at Guereda is still in need of improvements. The main shortcoming in primary health services has come as a result of insecurity. International Medical Corps (IMC) withdrew essentially all of its health services from Am Nabak from February 14 to March 6. Numerous refugees were reported to have walked 40km from Am Nabak to Touloum to receive medical care. On the preventative side, health experts at UNHCR and UNICEF are concerned this is an exceptionally high risk year for meningitis. They are looking to build contingency stocks of meningitis vaccines in eastern Chad.

18. Nutritional screening for children under five occurs on a monthly basis in all the camps. It has been standardized across the camps and includes interviews with families of children who have relapsed. Malnutrition rates are well within international rates at all of the camps with the possible exception of Am Nabak, which was missing data at the time of the visit. The rate of new entries into the therapeutic feeding centers fell from 470 in the month of July to less than 50 in January. Several camps have not reported a single case of severe malnutrition since the beginning of the year. Some of this could be a seasonal drop since many refugees are believed to have recently harvested crops in Sudan. If the significant drop in malnutrition rates continues into the rainy season, UNHCR may further consolidate the number of therapeutic feeding centers. According the Action Contre le Faim (ACR), a PRM-funded nutrition partner in Oure Cassoni, the rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in Oure Cassoni Camp stood at 2.3% in January, which is well within the standard of 10%. ACF said that its headquarters is contemplating closing its field office there at the end of the grant period in July. (Comment: this represents a very significant turnaround from the malnutrition figures cited in November 2005 and needs to be watched closely to ensure that the rate is sustainable. End comment).

Significant Gaps in Education and the Environment

NDJAMENA 00000413 003.2 OF 005

19. Primary education programs have operated below international standards in several key areas during the 2005-2006 school year. The bulk of the textbooks did not arrive at the camps until the beginning of March, meaning that students did not have access to textbooks for the first five months of the year. Twenty five percent of school-aged refugee children are not enrolled in school. Class sizes in almost all of the camps exceed the international standard of 50 students per class. Farchana, Touloum and Treguine have classes exceeding 150 students. Class sizes are constrained both by the number of rooms and the number of qualified refugee teachers. Since classes are held only in the morning, UNHCR is considering the addition of afternoon classes under the instruction of the existing refugee teachers, which would require additional salary expenses. With the existing budget constraints, this decision appears like it will be delayed until the next school year. For students finishing primary school, it is unlikely that they will be able to take their qualifying exams at the end of the year and thus will not receive Sudanese graduation certificates. The GoS suggested that the 400 eligible refugee students return to Sudan for their exams, a proposal that was rejected by UNHCR. UNICEF and UNHCR submitted a joint proposal to the GoS at the end of February asking it to provide the exams to UNICEF. UNICEF would then be responsible for administering the exams. The GoS has not yet responded to this request. There is currently no secondary education available to refugees, though small programs in vocational and life-skills training are underway in several of the camps.

¶10. It is clear that several of the northern camps are not sustainable given the current consumption firewood collection. Satellite imagery and technical analysis show a rapid deforestation around the camps. A recent study of Oure Cassoni camp found that refugees were collecting wood at three and a half times the rate that it is being replenished naturally. On the ground, this problem continues to manifest itself through a high level of frustration on the part of host communities and the beating of refugee women who are collecting firewood - the pressure on resources translates into one of the most significant refugee protection issues. Even with UNHCR's existing programs in Oure Cassoni to promote fuel efficient wood stoves, use trucking to collect wood from a forty kilometer radius and distribute \$660,000 of cooking fuel per year, refugees will still be forced to collect wood at well above the rate of replenishment in order to meet their cooking and lighting needs. Camps at Touloum and Iridimi, as well as the new camp at Gaga, face similar challenges.

Moving Am Nabak a Priority, Contingency Planning Mixed

¶11. After two years of debate, it appears that moving Am Nabak Camp has finally become a top priority for UNHCR. Insecurity has repeatedly limited access to the camp, sometimes forcing refugees to travel 40km on foot to receive basic medical services at Touloum Camp. Water shortages at the camp have forced UNHCR to spend significant resources trucking water from Iriba to Am Nabak. The local authorities are supportive of moving the camp, and the local sultan has said that he will personally assist the move as necessary. Refugees at Am Nabak have lessened their resistance to the idea after deteriorations in security and basic assistance. Within the next two months, 3,000 refugees may be moved to Mile Camp, which has excess space and water supply. UNHCR has identified three possible sites to the north of Iriba for the balance of the refugees and is testing the water potential in the area. With only three months remaining before the rainy season and no final decision on a new site location, it is unlikely that Am Nabak could be completely moved until late 2006 or early 2007.

¶12. UN agencies and NGOs have invested a considerable amount of time in contingency planning for possible disruptions to basic assistance for refugees in the event that a breakdown in law and order requires evacuation of expat staff. In

NDJAMENA 00000413 004.2 OF 005

reality, the actual response capacity remains mixed for the three focus areas of contingency planning: water provision, food and health. In the event of extended disruptions to camp access, water delivery systems will be the key factor determining how long refugees will be able to remain in the camps. With the current human and material resources on the ground, water delivery would last between one and three weeks depending upon the camp. Contingency fuel stocks for water pumps varied between ten and twenty days, with some organizations admitting that they sometimes dip into their contingency stocks, which then drop to just a few days. WFP is expanding its storage capacity to five months of food for the refugee populations. IFRC is warehousing additional food stocks at Hadjer Hadid to support 20,000 people for three months. Health contingency planning varies widely by organization. Many health NGOs boast that they will remain in the camps until security would deteriorate to the point that even the refugees would leave. Past experience with Am Nabak, however, reveals that this commitment is not tenable. UNHCR is encouraging contingency planning to hand over activities to either the Chadian MoH or the Chadian National Refugee Agency (CNAR), but health NGOs see their capacity as being too low and are uninterested in following such a strategy.

¶13. UNHCR expects that its 2006 program budget (the portion directly funding refugee activities) will fall from \$45 million in 2005 to \$39 million in 2006. A budget shortfall at the end of 2005 forced UNHCR to postpone infrastructure activities such as latrine and school construction, which places further pressure on the 2006 budget. As cost cutting measures, UNHCR expects to limit significantly the scope of programs in support of cooking fuel, income generation and infrastructure. It will also eliminate some expatriate staff positions and reduce funding for expatriates of NGO partners. If malnutrition rates remain low into the rainy season, UNHCR will revisit its nutritional programs to determine if cost-savings can be achieved by reducing capacity or consolidating programs.

¶14. In a meeting with Ambassador Wall on March 4, Judy Chang-Hopkins, UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner, stressed the importance of finding ways of better addressing firewood collection and host community needs in 2006 despite the budget cuts. These two issues are often the greatest source of strain between refugees and host communities, and host community frustration has already boiled over in 2006. In the village of Moudre, near Am Nabak Camp, UNHCR promised the villagers that it would construct schools and water points for the village in exchange for allowing UNHCR to truck water to the camp. When these activities were delayed because of budget cuts, the villagers beat the drivers of the water trucks and shut down UNHCR's activities. With the limited funds targeting host community activities in 2006, tensions will likely remain high in 2006.

¶15. International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), which works with the Chadian Red Cross to provide assistance to Bredjing and Treguine Camps, faced severe funding shortfalls at the end of 2005 and expects that it will scale back its operations and phase out by the end of 2006 unless it receives major increases in funding commitments. Support from the national societies of the Red Cross has waned considerably since 2004. IFRC plays a unique role because of its commitment to operate in insecurity and its material response capacity for emergencies, such as the fleet of all-wheel drive six ton trucks it maintains in eastern Chad.

¶16. On a positive note, at the end of February the NGO InterNews began radio broadcasts in Iriba of BBC news and local reports of host communities, refugees and humanitarian programs. This service is funded by a grant from USAID/OTI. On March 2, U.S. Ambassador Marc Wall traveled to Iriba to inaugurate the station along with the Sultan of Dar Zaghawa and the Governor of Biltine. The programs, which are broadcast in French, Arabic and Zaghawa, are intended to pass unbiased information to refugees and reduce the impact

NDJAMENA 00000413 005.2 OF 005

of local leaders filtering and bending information to their gain. They will reach Iridimi, Touloum, Am Nabak, Kounoungou and Mile camps. A second station in Abeche is also ready to begin programs in French, Arabic and Masaalit for Bredjing, Treguine, Farchana and Gaga camps.

Conclusion and Recommendations

¶17. The PRM mission offers the following conclusion and recommendations based on its visit to eastern Chad:

(a) Regarding insecurity and the limited humanitarian access in eastern Chad, Embassy N'Djamena and PRM should continue an open dialogue with UNHCR regarding their security strategy and closely review the findings of the UNDSS interagency mission. If UNHCR is unable to negotiate

improvements in security, a demarche to the GoC on their behalf is recommended in conjunction with other donors.

(b) The strong, timely support for WFP programs has played a key role in improving the nutritional status of refugees. The mission encourages donors in food commodities to continue their robust support of this operation, especially in light of the limited livelihoods options for refugees in most of the camps.

(c) PRM should discuss the 2006 strategy and financial situation of the IFRC mission to Chad with their headquarters in Geneva and consider increasing the 2006 contribution. Beyond providing strong assistance to the refugees, IFRC brings an important emergency response capacity to an area with rising insecurity.

(d) The relocation of Am Nabak Camp is still the preferred option in light of the security, program and protection issues associated with the camp. PRM should continue its policy of encouraging and supporting UNHCR to move the camp in a timely manner that protects the dignity of the refugees.

(e) The overall situation of nutrition programs should be revisited in June or July. If the current drop in malnutrition rates is not a seasonal phenomena but a long-term structural change, then some form of consolidation or program size reduction may be in order.

(f) PRM should consider funding for pilot secondary education programs in the 2006-2007 school year. Based on the number of expected graduates from primary school this year, Oure Cassoni and Bredjing/Treguine will have a sufficient number of incoming secondary students to warrant programs. WALL